



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 19, 2003

The Honorable Pam Roach, Chair
Senate Government Operations and Election
Post Office Box 40431
Olympia, Washington 98504-0431

Dear Senator Roach:

We are writing to you regarding Senate Bill 5764, regarding fluoridation of public water systems, scheduled to be heard before your committee today. The State Board of Health is not taking a position on the bill, but we want you to know that the Board is concerned about protecting the oral health of all children.

Dental caries or cavities is the most common childhood chronic illness, and in modern society is largely a disease of poor children. Fluoridation is known to be the most effective and most inexpensive intervention to prevent dental caries. Fluoride can be given to children on an individual as well as on a population basis, although research demonstrates that children who live in poverty are much less likely to receive fluoride at all. The State Board of Health is particularly concerned about the poor levels of access to children's oral health care. For that reason, the Board encourages the state to explore solutions that would include maintaining Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) dental coverage to the degree possible and expanding the use of fluoridation as a population-based approach to preventing dental caries in people with limited access to oral health care.

Given budget realities, fluoridation is a population-based approach that is the most cost-effective.

We appreciate your attention.

Sincerely,

Linda Lake, Chair
State Board of Health

Vickie Ybarra, RN, MPH, Chair
State Board of Health Committee on Children's
Health and Well-Being

cc: Senate Government Operations & Election
Washington State Board of Health Members
Mich'l Needham, Governor's Office of Health Policy
Patty Hayes, Department of Health
Don Sloma, Washington State Board of Health